

REVIEWS OF BOOKS

THE NATIONAL MEDICAL DICTIONARY. By JOHN S. BILLINGS, A.M., M.D., LL.D., D.C.L., with the collaboration of many eminent scholars. 2 vols. Imp. 8 vo. 1889. Lea Brothers & Co, Philadelphia.

The publishers in their descriptive circular announcing the appearance of this dictionary claim that the present era is one of word making. And so in striving to keep up with the times they present to the profession this imposing work which defines for us 84,844 words and phrases, all belonging to the language of medicine. But so rapidly does this process of word making go on that it is an interesting fact that a word which is at the present time being talked and written as much as any other one is not to be found in this dictionary, though this book is so recent and comprehensive. The word we refer to is *Appendicitis*! It is true that the editor would have some excuse for rejecting this newly coined term on the plea that it was not lawful to join a Greek ending to a Latin root, but in turning over the pages of the book we find that he is debarred from any such action by the fact that he has already added his sanction to such miscegenation in word-building by admitting the term *perivasculitis*. Whatever the offense to good scholarship this new hybrid word, appendicitis, may give, it is nevertheless very convenient, and so wonderfully expressive of the pathological fact that it is intended to convey that we believe it has come to stay, and will therefore claim the attention of Dictionary makers in the future.

An important feature of this Dictionary is that not only English medical words but also French, German, Italian and Latin are given in it, both as independent words and as synonyms. The convenience

which this feature of the book will be to many students must be very great.

The whole make up of the book is attractive; the principal terms appear in heavy faced type that makes them prominent, and by the use of lighter type and of italics for definition and cross references, the eye is greatly aided in its search for required information. The definitions are clear and concise. The whole is presented in two good-sized convenient imperial octavo volumes of about 800 pages each.

It would be expected that a Dictionary compiled under the direction of one who had enjoyed such special training and who had abundant access to such special helps as has been the privilege of the eminent Librarian of the Surgeon General's office at Washington, would unite in itself many and unusual features of excellence. That he has been willing to add such a laborious task as the preparation of these volumes to his other duties will not fail to be gratefully appreciated by the medical profession. We welcome the book and commend it to the confidence of every reading physician.

We have looked with a little curiosity to see how this Dictionary would treat the orthography of those two very common terms, hæmorrhage and cannula. There is a very strong tendency among many to simplify both of these words and follow the French by writing hemorrhage and canula. Dr. B, however, though recognizing that hæmorrhage is sometimes spelt with an e instead of æ, still gives every prominence to the diphthong, and obviously the whole influence of this Dictionary is to preserve the old spelling which it has by right of derivation. When we look up *cannula* however, the case is reversed. Though *cannula* comes rightfully by its two nn's by derivation from the Latin *canna*, we find it here treated as an interloper. The reader is informed that a cannula is a canula, and for further information has to look further as to the latter word.

The inconsistency in the treatment of the two terms is apparent. Such a thing as this is, however, but a trifle. The book is a grand one, and ushers in the year with much promise as to the high character of the literary work which the *Annus Medicus*, 1890, has in store for us.

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